

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the study elaborates on the background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, and state of the art as an outline of the importance of materials inside.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The transition from online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to in-person instruction has brought significant challenges for teachers, particularly in maintaining student engagement and focus. While online learning provided students with flexibility and innovative tools, it also encouraged passive behaviours among them, which reduced focus, engagement, and participation in conventional classrooms (Muna, 2022). Furthermore, 94.45% of 732 students exhibited low engagement due to online learning that disrupted their emotional connection, participation, and performance (Kristiana et al., 2023). The shift has raised concerns, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where sustaining student interest and engagement are essential to developing language skills.

The descriptive statistics for disengagement measures in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 indicate that Indonesia exhibits low student engagement with lower effort scores around 25% and low work mastery between 10-15% compared to the average scores (Buchholz et al., 2022). Research identifies student engagement as a key factor in academic performance, as it leads to better knowledge retention and persistence. On the contrary, disengagement

declines student achievement, increases alienation, and heightens dropout rates, especially in secondary and higher education (Samarasinghe et al., 2023). In addition, low student engagement is exacerbated by the traditional teaching methods that are no longer engaging and aligned with the attention patterns and interests of current digital-driven students (Yue, 2024). The extensive consumption of digital media, short-form videos, and addictive online games, which are characterized by instant rewards, high stimulation, and fast-paced content, has altered students' cognitive habits. These experiences contribute to the decrease in students' attention spans and focus, as well as increase the demand for engaging learning stimulation (Asif & Kazi, 2024). Hence, it highlights the need for teaching strategies that align with the evolving learning needs and preferences of contemporary students. Among those strategies, gamification is particularly effective at engaging students by adapting to their shortened attention spans through structured and enjoyable game elements that make challenging activities engaging (Çınar & Erişen, 2022).

Gamification refers to the implementation of game elements and techniques in non-game contexts (Werbach & Hunter, 2020). It fosters a dynamic learning environment that facilitates student engagement by creating an interactive and engaging alternative to teacher-centered approaches that typically rely on rote memorization learning (Xu & Sukavatee, 2025). It encompasses digital tools such as Quizizz, Kahoot, and Learning Management System (LMS) platforms, as well as non-digital activities such as reward or point systems, group competitions, and role-playing activities. These approaches offer adaptable and flexible solutions to

varied Indonesian classroom contexts, including large-sized classes and diverse resource settings. The implementation of gamification promotes student engagement, reduces anxiety, and improves academic performance (Al-Khresheh, 2025). However, the effectiveness of gamification largely hinges on teachers as they are directly influencing student engagement as well as shape the quality of implementation and the overall learning environment (Samarasinghe et al., 2023). It further depends on their ability to strategically align game elements with specific learning objectives, curriculum requirements, and diverse student needs. Therefore, understanding teachers' perceptions is paramount to ensure meaningful and effective integration of gamification in the classroom.

Despite growing interest in gamification, significant research gaps hinder its contextualized application in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms. Existing research often focuses on higher education settings or international contexts (Pradana et al., 2024; Spathopoulou & Pitychoutis, 2024). Furthermore, although teachers play a crucial role in shaping classroom practices with their experience that provide valuable insights into practical strategies, studies on teacher perspectives remain underexplored compared to students' views (Samanta et al., 2024; Nazar & Ismail, 2025). Studies on gamification also tend to address specific aspects of engagement rather than examining behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions comprehensively (Watini & Setyowati, 2023; Xu & Sukavatee, 2025). Moreover, although non-digital strategies have shown a promising result in low-tech environments (Mardiah & Desi, 2024), most research continues to emphasize digital tools (Pradana et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2024). Hence, this study aims to

address these gaps by exploring secondary EFL teachers' perceptions of digital and non-digital gamification implementation, their perceived impact on students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, and the challenges they encountered in the implementation.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of Indonesian secondary EFL teachers on gamification implementation?
2. What are the perceptions of Indonesian secondary EFL teachers on gamification in fostering student engagement?
3. What challenges do Indonesian secondary EFL teachers encounter in implementing gamification in the classroom?

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of gamification as a teaching approach and its potential to foster student engagement in secondary EFL classrooms in Indonesia. Specifically, it aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of gamification implementation, examine how they view the efficacy in fostering students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, and explore



the challenges they encounter in implementing both digital and non-digital gamification strategies in secondary EFL classrooms.

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on exploring the perceptions of 30 secondary school EFL teachers from both public and private schools in Indonesia. This study is limited to English language education at the secondary level, focusing solely on teachers' perspectives and excluding students' perceptions, other subject areas, and higher education contexts. Furthermore, this research is grounded in two theoretical frameworks, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and the Student Engagement Model (Fredricks et al., 2004), and adapts analytical outline proposed by (Xu & Sukavatee, 2025), including technological, cognitive, and pedagogical to structure the analysis of teachers' perceptions, which were modified to fit the context of the research.

The technological and pedagogical dimensions, grounded in TAM, examine teachers' perceptions of gamification's usability, instructional usefulness, and implementation challenges. The study focuses on perceived ease of use (the effort required to implement gamification), perceived usefulness (the contribution to teaching effectiveness), and external variables (e.g., institutional support, infrastructure, training) that influence adoption and classroom integration. The cognitive dimension, informed by the Student Engagement Model, explores how teachers perceive gamification's impact on students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Engagement indicators include student focus and

participation (behavioral), mental effort and self-regulation (cognitive), and affective responses such as enjoyment, confidence, and reduced anxiety (emotional). This integrated framework provides a comprehensive view of how gamification is perceived and implemented as a strategy to support student engagement in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on effective teaching strategies that enhance student engagement through gamification in EFL instruction by exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences in the implementation. The significance of this study is divided into theoretical significance and practical significance.

#### **1.5.1. Theoretical Significance**

This study contributes to the existing literature on gamification in EFL education, specifically within the Indonesian context. It enriches the understanding of the impact of gamification on student engagement and learning experiences among contemporary secondary school students in the digital age through the lens of teachers as frontline practitioners. It also addresses gaps in the literature by incorporating teacher perceptions and practical challenges they experienced to advance the conceptualization of gamification in EFL classrooms.

### **1.5.2. Practical Significance**

In examining the practical benefits of this research, it is important to consider the perspectives of different stakeholders, as outlined in the following sections:

1. Benefit for researchers:

This study contributes to future studies across diverse educational contexts by providing insights into gamification effectiveness in fostering student engagement and concrete implementation challenges. It offers a framework for aligning learning processes with students' current needs and teachers' readiness and experience in using innovative teaching methods like gamification, which supports the development of more inclusive and engaging learning environments.

2. Benefit for teachers:

The study provides insights and guidance for an inclusive and engaging learning environment. By understanding how gamification strategy can increase student engagement, teachers can enhance their teaching effectiveness and foster a more engaging classroom through various gamification activities and practical recommendations.

3. Benefit for educational stakeholders:

This study benefits educational stakeholders, such as policymakers, educational institutions, and relevant authorities by providing insights

into the importance of integrating innovative teaching methods into educational policies and practices. The findings offer guidance for these stakeholders in developing supportive educational policies, providing resource and infrastructure support, and designing training programs that align with global educational trends, teachers' professional development needs, and the learning preferences of digital-native students to facilitate the effective adoption of gamification approaches at regional and national levels.

#### **1.6. State of the Art**

Gamification has gained increasing attention as an instructional strategy to foster student engagement. Studies such as those by Xu & Sukavatee (2025) and Nazar & Ismail (2025) have explored how gamification tools enhance motivation and participation. While these studies emphasize the potential of gamification to create interactive and student-centered learning, they often examine implementation focused only on specific digital tools. Other studies, such as Spathopoulou & Pitychoutis (2024) and Ramzan et al. (2024), investigated how teachers perceived gamification as useful in EFL classrooms. However, these studies often discuss teachers' perceptions of gamification implementation within international education systems, with limited empirical focus on how teachers perceived gamification affects student engagement across all dimensions in Indonesian EFL contexts.



In the Indonesian context, existing research on gamification in EFL classrooms remains relatively limited. Mardiah & Desi (2024) demonstrated that non-digital gamification in junior high school English classes led to a measurable increase in student engagement. However, their study was largely focused on student outcomes and did not address how teachers perceived or adapted these strategies. Another research by Putra et al. (2024) have explored teachers' perceptions of gamification in online classroom and did not examine its implementation within on-site classrooms.

Although these studies highlight the potential benefits of gamification to enhance EFL learning, they tend to prioritize digital gamification and often lack a comprehensive framework integrates behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Very few studies investigate how gamification operates in everyday classroom settings in Indonesian secondary schools. Moreover, research exploring Indonesian teachers' perspectives on gamification implementation remain limited, particularly how they perceive and implement both digital and non-digital gamification strategies within the constraints of national curricula, technological access, and pedagogical beliefs.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring how Indonesian secondary EFL teachers perceive the implementation of gamification in their classrooms. It places a particular focus on both digital and non-digital strategies, exploring how teachers implement gamification and confront contextual challenges, and interpret student engagement outcomes. Using a mixed-method approach supported by both quantitative and qualitative data, this study provides original insights into how

Indonesian secondary EFL teachers perceive and accept gamification as a teaching strategy, how they interpret its impact on student engagement, and the challenges they encounter in implementation. By connecting teacher beliefs with classroom practices, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of how gamification can be effectively integrated into EFL instruction.

